



Managing Anger in an Unforgiving World

"My life is at the mercy of any scoundrel who chooses to put me in a passion!"

John Hunter (1700s), British physician known for his bad temper

This statement by John Hunter was prophetic. At a meeting of the board of St. Georges Hospital, he became involved in a heated argument, walked out, and dropped dead of a heart attack.

We all know what anger is, and we've all felt it: whether as a fleeting annoyance or as full-fledged rage. Anger is a completely normal, usually healthy, human emotion. But when it gets out of control and turns destructive, it can lead to problems — problems at work, in your personal relationships, and even your health.

Anger can be caused by both external and internal events. You could be angry at a specific person (such as a co-worker or supervisor), or event (a traffic jam, a canceled flight), or your anger could be caused by worrying or brooding about your personal problems. Memories of traumatic or enraging events can also trigger angry feelings.

The Anger Trap

In essence, anger is the feeling we get when we desire the world to be different and we don't get our way.

Rodger Kamenetz, Professor at Louisiana State University, says anger becomes a "trap" when we lose control over its effects on us. This makes us prone to emotional outbursts and depression. And the anger that inspires some to violence



in the workplace is no different than the anger that inspires acts of terror or brutality.

Kamenetz warns that anger is a feedback loop, "anger produces further anger."

The idea that you should "let your anger out" is a dangerous myth. Even if anger is warranted, losing control of it can become destructive.

Likewise, anger can cycle into violence. Anger fed violence gets directed because, "anger needs an object," says Kamenetz, "it is impossible to sustain our anger without an object." This is why anger, violence, and obsessive behavior are so often linked.

Those who are caught in the anger trap, can't see, in their rage, that violence is actually "turning themselves into what they hate."

Are You Too Angry?

There are psychological tests that measure the intensity of angry feelings, how prone to anger you are, and how well you handle it. But chances are good that if you do have a problem with anger, you already know it.

Generally, you're having anger prob-

lems when you develop a low tolerance for frustration, meaning simply that you can't take things in stride. And you get particularly infuriated if the situation seems somehow unjust.

If you find yourself acting in ways that seem out of control and frightening, you might need help finding better ways to deal with this emotion.

Expressing Anger

The instinctive, natural way to express anger is to respond aggressively. Anger is a natural, adaptive response to threats, which allow us to fight and to defend ourselves when we are attacked. A certain amount of anger, therefore, is necessary to our survival.

On the other hand, we can't physically lash out at every person or object that irritates or annoys us. Laws, social norms, and common sense place limits on how far our anger can take us.

Expressing your angry feelings in an assertive—not aggressive—manner is the healthiest way to express anger. To do this, you have to learn how to make clear what your needs are, and how to get them met, without hurting others. Being assertive doesn't mean being pushy or demanding; it means being respectful of yourself and others.

Dr. Lynne McClure, expert on anger management, subtitled one of her books "managing anger in an unforgiving world." Because we

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are, legitimately, victims sometimes, people often want to hold on to their anger. She says it can feel good, at least for a while, “because you feel so righteous and justified to be angry.” But holding anger is dangerous in the long run.

If your anger is with a person, talking things out can usually help. McClure explains that if the source of your anger is a “real issue,” something that can be depersonalized, then there’s a chance that a resolution can be found. A good place to start is for both parties to identify and agree on the concerns they have in common.

Angry people tend to jump to—and act on—conclusions. Don’t say the first thing that comes into your head, but slow down and think carefully about what you want to say. At the same time, listen carefully to what the other person is saying and take your time before answering.

Suppressing Anger

The danger is when your anger turns inward — on yourself. Anger turned inward may cause hypertension, high blood pressure, or depression.

Unexpressed anger can also lead to pathological expressions of anger, such as passive-aggressive behavior (getting back at people indirectly, without telling them why, rather than confronting them head-on), or a personality that seems perpetually cynical and hostile.

People who are constantly putting others down, criticizing everything, and making cynical comments are exhibiting conduct brought on by trying to suppress their anger.

Calming Anger

Anger can be suppressed, and then converted or redirected. This happens when you hold in your anger, stop thinking about it, and focus on something positive.

The aim is to inhibit or suppress your anger and convert it into more constructive behavior. This means not just controlling your outward behavior, but also controlling your internal responses, taking steps to lower your heart rate, calm yourself down, and let the feelings subside.

Relaxation

Simple relaxation tools can help calm down angry feelings:

- Breathe deeply, from your diaphragm; breathing from your chest won’t relax you. Picture your breath coming up from your “gut.”
- Slowly repeat a calm word or phrase such as “relax,” “take it easy.” Repeat it to yourself while breathing deeply.
- Use imagery; visualize a relaxing experience, from either your memory or your imagination.
- Slow, non-strenuous, yoga or martial arts exercises can relax your muscles and make you feel much calmer.

Practice these techniques daily. Learn to use them automatically when you’re in a tense situation.

Another relaxation strategy is to give yourself scheduled break times in your day. One example is the working mother who has a standing rule that when she comes home from work, for the first 15 minutes, “nobody talks to Mom unless the house is on fire.” After this brief quiet time, she feels better prepared to handle demands from her kids without blowing up at them.

Cognitive Restructuring

Simply put, this means changing the way you think. Angry people tend to curse, swear, or speak in highly colorful terms that reflect their inner thoughts. When you’re angry, your thinking can get very exaggerated and overly dramatic. Try replacing these thoughts with more rational ones. For instance, instead of telling yourself, “oh, it’s awful, it’s terrible, everything’s ruined,” tell yourself, “it’s frustrating, and it’s understandable that I’m upset about it, but it’s not the end of the world and getting angry is not going to fix it anyhow.”

Logic defeats anger, because anger, even when it’s justified, can quickly become irrational. So use cold hard logic on yourself. Remind yourself that the world is “not out to get you,” you’re just experiencing some of the rough spots of daily life. Do this each time you feel anger getting the best of you, and it’ll help you get a more balanced perspective.

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Uncontrolled Anger Sequence

Everybody experiences their own anger in unique, individual ways. However, it is possible to identify some common features in the pattern of uncontrolled anger.

1. **TRIGGERS:** Something unpleasant happens, our buttons are pushed (perceived attack on our safety, power, pride, autonomy, esteem, etc.).
2. **THOUGHTS:** We evaluate others’ behavior, we think about what happened. Jerk! Unfair! Terrible! Awful! They shouldn’t do that!
3. **FEELINGS:** We respond emotionally to our thoughts and evaluations. Hurt! Scared! Outraged! Attacked! Hopeless!
4. **BEHAVIORS:** We act out our feelings. Run! Withdraw! Cry! Fight! Attack! Revenge!
5. **CONSEQUENCES:** The consequences of our acting out can escalate our anger and the cycle continues.

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Angry people tend to demand things: fairness, appreciation, agreement, willingness to do things their way. Everyone wants these things, and we are all hurt and disappointed when we don't get them; but when people demand them, and when their demands aren't met, their disappointment becomes anger.

People need to become aware of their demanding nature and translate it into reasonable expectations. Not every problem has a perfect solution. The best attitude, then, is to focus on how you handle and deal with the problem. Make a plan, and check your progress along the way. Resolve to give it your best, but also not to punish yourself if an answer doesn't come right away. Using a little silly humor with yourself can also help defuse rage before it starts.

If you can approach a problem with your best intentions and efforts, and make a serious attempt to face it head-on, you will be less likely to lose patience and fall into all-or-nothing thinking, even if the problem does not get solved right away.

Do You Need Counseling?

If you feel that your anger is really out of control, if it is having a negative impact on your relationships and on important parts of your life, you might consider counseling to learn how to handle it better.

When you talk to a prospective therapist, ask about their approach to anger management. Make sure this isn't only a course of action designed to "put you in touch with your feelings and express them" — that may be precisely what your problem is.

Remember, you can't eliminate anger — and it wouldn't be a good idea if you could. In spite of all your efforts, things will happen that will cause you anger; and sometimes it will be justifiable anger. Life will be filled with frustration, pain, loss, and the unpredictable actions of others. You can't change that; but you can change the way you let such events affect you.

For more information, contact the Michigan State Police Office of Behavioral Science, at 517-334-7745.

Resources/Reading:

"Controlling Anger – Before It Controls You," American Psychological Association, www.apa.org.

"Managing Anger: Understanding the Dynamics of Violence, Abuse, and Control," Peter Holmes, M.A., Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, www.siu.edu/offices/counsel/anger

"Angry Men" and "Angry Women," by Dr. Lynne McClure, www.mcclureassociates.com



Project Management: Strategic Leadership In Law Enforcement

The key is not to make quick decisions, but to make timely decisions.

- Gen. Colin Powell

Once considered a quaint topic for magazines, project management has become one of the top skills in the 21st century workplace, both public and private. The truth is, there is nothing magical about project management, and it's no miracle cure. However, there are some learnable skills that will help any type of manager work easier and more effectively.

Planning

Project management is really about being organized.



The best place to start is to identify your destination. For an organization, that means having a clearly articulated STRATEGIC DIRECTION. If you can't articulate your strategic direction, you can't make smart decisions about which projects to take on.

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Even if you have a well-stated strategy, you might want to try something else. Instead, look at all the projects currently underway, then decide which direction they collectively seem to suggest. Now ask yourself, does this match your formally written vision? If your direction seems to be supporting the organization's MISSION as you want it to, great! If not, decide how you need to change your project track.

The traditional style of having an "annual" strategic planning meeting just isn't timely for making important project decisions. Organizations need a CONTINUOUS strategy to identify and address problems. Under a continuous approach, strategy isn't a plan – it's a direction. Projects need plans. And with a continuous strategy, if a "newly" proposed project is strategically desired, the manager can start "planning the project" immediately.

Begin with the end in mind, ask yourself: "Where do I want to end up with this project?" Then work backward from there until you reach: "We are here right now." Then reverse the process and work forward. Along the way you can work out the sequence of steps (and estimate the time needed) to complete the project.

Prioritizing Multiple Projects

Prioritizing is probably the most difficult part of management today. The problem with trying to evenly manage multiple projects is it means being partially engaged in several activities and never fully engaged in any one of them. This isn't always good. Think about it: Do you want your surgeon multitasking when he's operating on you?

The 80/20 PRINCIPLE – observed by Vilfredo Pareto in 1897 – is about prioritizing your time so you can give full engagement to the most important projects and tasks. The trick is to accurately identify 20% of those tasks and projects that are most vital now, then give them 80% of your time.

In the book, *First Things First*, Stephen Covey recommends that managers develop a Time Management Matrix, where you prioritize your daily calendar into four quadrants:



- Quadrant I represents Pareto's most important 20%, the things that are both "important" and "urgent," such as a crisis or an important project deadline.
- Quadrant II are activities that are "important," but you still have time to work on them, so they are not urgent – yet!
- Quadrant III are those interruptions that seem to demand immediate or "urgent" attention, but they really aren't that important (some meetings, phone calls).
- Quadrant IV is reserved for those activities that are not urgent and not important (junk mail, some phone calls and e-mails).

Unfortunately, Stephen Covey fully admits that "some professions are, by nature, almost completely Quadrant I...firefighters...many doctors and nurses...police officers!" "For these people," Covey says, "it's even more critical to capture Quadrant II time for the simple reason that it builds their capacity to handle Quadrant I."

It is important to reemphasize, the manager must exercise PRECISE judgment concerning which tasks and projects are most important, right now! Prioritizing being what it is, managers often complain that they spend 80% of their time putting out fires. Unfortunately, this is often true. But putting

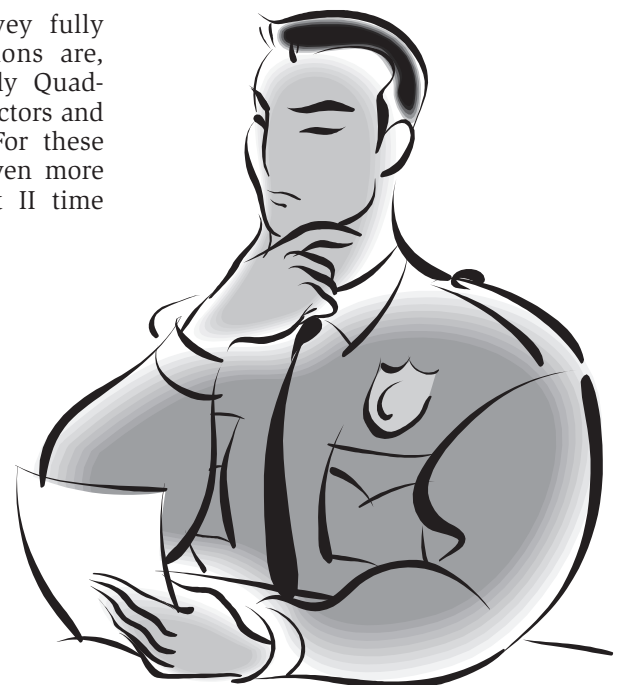
out fires that could damage the organization's ability to perform its mission is one of the reasons why we need managers.

Given the necessity of reserving 80% effort for mission critical projects, it is still important for managers to give some of that extra 20% to special projects. While many special projects are not critical, they still afford the organization ways of finding improvements that would not happen otherwise.

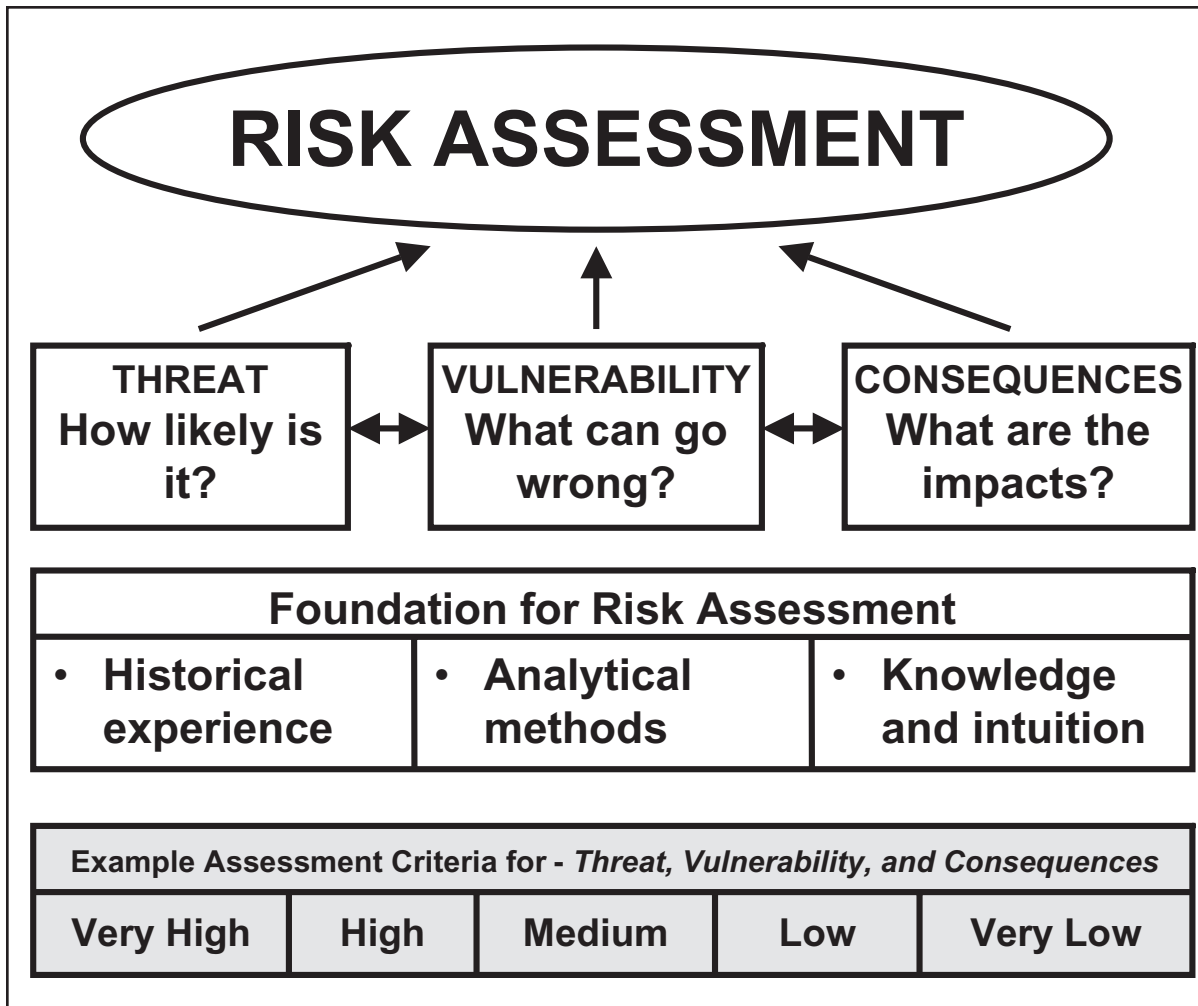
Preserving some FREE TIME or THINKING TIME is critical. If you schedule yourself, or your organization, too tightly, you begin to trade off intellect for efficiency. You could end up changing your organization from a brilliant gourmet restaurant into a fastfood drive-through.

Violating the 80/20 prioritization ratio can be dangerous in another way. Many an organization has been crippled or destroyed because managers diverted too many resources toward a special project that started to compete with the organization's primary mission. Risk assessment is a process used to identify this threat.

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Risk Assessment

Risk Assessment is another system for prioritizing time and resources. Historically, risk assessment has been widely used for accident risks, natural hazard risks, business interruption risks, project risks, and financial risks. While homeland security risks require a different approach than other types of risk, the same fundamentals apply. Take for example the U.S. Navy's efforts to allocate limited resources among many antiterrorism capabilities. The diagram demonstrates three measures of risk:

- **THREAT** is a measure of "how likely" a specific type of attack will be initiated against a specific target (that is, a scenario).
- **VULNERABILITY** is a measure of the likelihood that various safeguards against a scenario will fail, or "what can go wrong?"

- **CONSEQUENCE** is the magnitude of the "negative impacts" if the attack is successful. Some organizations, including the Navy, use the term "criticality" to describe the impact of an event.

Based on these assessments the Navy, or any type of organization, must:

- Prioritize gaps in its capabilities according to risk.
- Determine which capabilities to fund in upcoming years, based on risk impact compared to cost.
- Optimizing its limited investment capital for optimum effect.

Any manager can use this system for any type of assessment. There are several approaches to making a scale for measuring risk. One means is to define the different risks, then assign the appropriate threat, vulnerability,

and consequence information.

Assigning a numerical score or some other assessment grade will provide a scoring system that will express the measure of risk. But like any system of prioritization, the data "out" is only as good as the data going "in."

Preparing

To prepare a project for successful completion, in all cases, managers need to COORDINATE with people and resources that are involved or might be affected. Forming COALITION TEAMS helps work the project all the way from concept through implementation.

COMMUNICATION is the key to EMPOWERMENT, so everyone can prepare for what needs to be done.

Executing

Executing means acting to accomplish the project. ALIGNMENT is the challenge of bringing time, people, and resources together in the pursuit of a common project. If you can accomplish this, you need to provide STANDARDS and DEADLINES as a performance baseline to measure progress. Constant communication, on multiple levels, is key to keeping all members of the team on track.

One way to simplify execution is to inject into the overall plan a series of MINI-PROJECTS, then coordinate timelines for completion. This provides a series of shorter, easier steps that builds toward the final accomplishment of the goal. Properly delegating and supervising are essential to successful execution.

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Assessing

Assessments start early in each program with IN-PROCESS REVIEWS, and continue through till the end of a project. It may include monitoring such diverse areas as resource use, development of subordinates, efficiency, effects of stress and fatigue, morale, and project accomplishment. On rare occasions, an assessment may indicate the program is invalid and should be scrapped all together.

Upon successful completion of a project, an AFTER-ACTION REVIEW gives subordinates a chance to learn from each other, as well as provide feedback to the leader. And finally, the leader must find ways to PRESERVE the benefits of the project "culturally." Too often a valuable and successful project is lost to an organization because the initiating leader retires or moves on, and nobody steps up to maintain the program.

Conclusion

Managing multiple projects does not mean working more hours or giving up your free time. It does mean working smarter. The key is to treat your work time as the precious limited resource that it is. Studies have demonstrated that for every minute a person spends planning, he or she saves 4 minutes in execution.

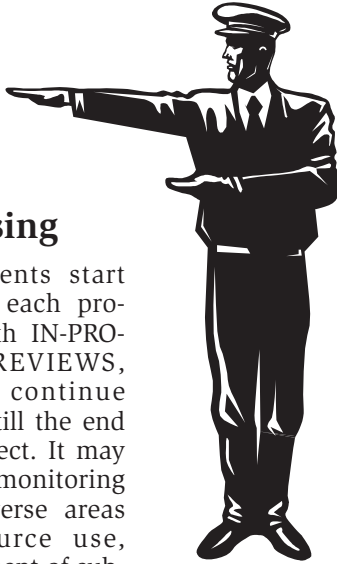
Resources/Reading:

"Army Leadership," FM 22-100

"First Things First," by Stephen Covey

"Managing Multiple Projects," by Irene and Michael Tobis

"The Power of Full Engagement," by Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz



Managing Your Time and Energy: One Challenge At A Time

- Keep a personal calendar with you at most times, organized by hour for each day, as well as one that shows a full week or month at a glance. Use a system to prioritize your calendar.
- Get the most important things done first; focus on only one or two major engagements at a time.
- Next, be proactive and tackle the small problems before they become big problems.
- Leave time in your calendar for routine tasks, interruptions, and the inevitable crisis.
- Sometimes, saying "No" to projects is definitely in order. When you cannot do the task, it's a low-priority, it's a waste of time, someone else can do it better, unrealistic deadlines are imposed, the request is illegal, unethical or compromises your integrity.
- Establish long-term as well as short-term goals, with periodic deadlines to measure progress. Reorganize large tasks into a series of small tasks.
- Set a time or place where you can do your work and minimize interruptions.
- Establishing a filing system. Have a place for everything, and keep your desk clear of everything except your current project.
- Reply instantly to your e-mail if possible, then remove it from your in-mailbox.
- The two major goals of managing paperwork are to control the flow and keep it moving.
- Time can be saved by eliminating unnecessary meetings, phone calls, and by making use of electronic tools.
- If you are responsible for running meetings, make and distribute an agenda ahead of time, and then follow the agenda during the meeting.
- Leverage experienced individuals for your teams to help teach other members.
- Encourage conflict resolution to help individuals see mutual benefit and enhance buy in.
- Bring teams together to celebrate success and promote continuous improvement.
- Focus on "doing" rather than "not doing." "I will check my email at three specific times a day" rather than "I will stop checking my email so often."
- Keep a water bottle at your desk for a quick refresher. Fatigue and sluggishness are signs of dehydration. Water also makes you fuller and keeps you from eating when you're not hungry. Next to water, tea is the best beverage.
- Design rituals to replenish your four sources of energy: physical, emotional, mental and spiritual; i.e., find time to exercise your body, rest your mind and enjoy life, stimulate your intellect, and reaffirm your ethics and values.